



THE RUTH ANN OVERBECK
CAPITOL HILL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview with Karin Edgett

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Transcriber: Anna Nadgrodkiewicz

TAPE 1/SIDE 1

HANNOLD: Hi, this is Beth Hannold and I'm here with Karin Edgett. It's June 18th, 2009 and we're at Karen's house at 805 C Street NE. Karin, thanks for talking with us today.

EDGETT: Sure, Beth.

HANNOLD: How long have you lived on Capitol Hill?

EDGETT: Since 1985.

HANNOLD: And what brought you here?

EDGETT: Well, I moved into the area after graduating from college looking for a job in advertising and I first moved to Virginia—wasn't so happy over there, so I moved to Capitol Hill thinking that was the nicest neighborhood area—and here I am.

HANNOLD: And initially did you have your own business or you worked for someone else?

EDGETT: I worked for several agencies and after about six or seven years of working for other agencies I left and didn't really intend to start my own job, own business. I was looking for another job and one of the companies I had been working for, the agency asked me to come and work for them and I said, "how about I work from home?"—and that was the beginning of my agency. And that was 20 years ago.

HANNOLD: 20 years ago [repeats under her breath]. So, exactly 20 years ago, in '89?

EDGETT: Pretty much, yeah. I mean, 1988 now.

HANNOLD: OK. I saw on your website some timelines and it sort of started a little bit more recently than that. There were other sort of milestones, I guess.

EDGETT: Well, one of the milestones was originally when I was more of a traditional agency and that was I was working with clients all over the country and I decided after about four—five—years I'd rather work with local small business and ... So that was a big transition and that's when I had to go from being more of a traditional advertising agency that dealt mostly in media buying and bigger campaigns to someone who is more of a consultant, partner with businesses and working as a design, marketing partner. And the business changed from mostly advertising expenditures to more design consulting and brand name and ... Because with small business, they generally don't have big advertising budgets so ...

HANNOLD: Sure.

EDGETT: You know, you can consult with them, you get them going, and sometimes you manage advertising and sometimes you don't.

HANNOLD: Can you say a little about branding—it's the word we hear a lot but I'm not sure I even understand fully what ...

EDGETT: Branding is the personality of a company, it's what people perceive about the company. It's kind of, kind of like people have their own personality, companies have their own personality and the company's personality is not exactly something you can create—it just happens to be. If the owners of the company have set out to with certain business practices that helps form the personality of the company. If the company is selling ice cream versus cars that helps form the personality of the company. If they have a conscience, if they're sort of forward thinking, if they're on the growth path—and all those things weigh into the consciousness of the perception of the company, the personality, what the company is. And so that becomes the company's brand and for our company all we do is come in and we take all these things that already exist and we put them into writing, into concrete communication form so that when the company's trying to communicate to its consumers they don't miscue in message, so you're not selling high-end cars to someone who wants a, you know, hybrid.

HANNOLD: Uh-huh.

EDGETT: You know, you or somebody that, you know, wants to buy from a company that has a good example but maybe has good practices when it comes to treating their employees or whatnot versus somebody who doesn't. You know, you can make those choices because you're not going to get a mixed message. Somebody is not going to come out there and say, "well, we sell, you know, we sell something that's healthy for you" when it turns out it's not. Or something that, you know, makes you ... It almost—branding is like—I think I'm going off on the wrong tangent almost at this point and maybe I've been away from it a little too long.

HANNOLD: Well, why don't we bring it back to Eastern Market. And is this correct: in 2005 you were asked to create a marketing campaign, which I believe you called a branding campaign ...

EDGETT: Yes, uh-huh.

HANNOLD: ... for Eastern Market? So, first of all, if you could say briefly what your familiarity was with the Market at that point, and then how you created the campaign.

EDGETT: Well, we were asked by Eastern Market Venture to create a, basically a logo. I think they came to us and said, "Can you develop a marketing campaign and a logo for Eastern Market and a

signage campaign?” And we came back and said, “Well, at this point we should, you know, we have to extract the brand that is Eastern Market into all those, so, we’ll do a whole branding study on Eastern Market.” And with that we went out and we interviewed tons of community people who are familiar with Eastern Market from all different levels. We talked to the historians, we talked to the people who actually sell there—there’s many different groups of people that sell there, from people selling at the flea market to arts and crafts to farmers’ lines to the inside vendors. We talked to neighbors that had been around forever, we talked to people who shop there, we talked to people who are involved in the tourist industry and what their thoughts are on Eastern Market. We gathered up everybody’s idea what Eastern Market meant to them and how they perceived Eastern Market in order to pull all that together into something that would be considered a viable mark, so that when somebody saw that, they would instantly associate it with Eastern Market and they’d feel like it represented what they felt about Eastern Market.

HANNOLD: Uh-huh.

EDGETT: And so we tried to cover everybody’s tracks, you know, so that we didn’t end up making a mark that just appealed to the historians, which was really easy to do.

HANNOLD: Uh-huh.

EDGETT: Or just to the people that were selling there. We didn’t want it to be necessarily, you know, something that did not fit. A good brand, a good mark, a good combination of marketing materials and branding materials will make people feel like, ah, that’s what Eastern Market is. There is no question about it when they see the mark they’ll be like, OK, that represents the Market we know.

HANNOLD: So how would you describe what you came up with and why that?

EDGETT: We had presented several ideas—I think four ideas altogether that came out of those discussions. The one that everybody chose pretty much unanimously was one that’s a small sort of graphic representation of Eastern Market but it had a view of the eastern side of Eastern Market with sunrays coming out of the Market. And the sunrays had a lot to do with the fact that this Market was in the eastern part of Washington, DC. It also tied in with this slogan that was mounted on a plaque that we had actually helped develop earlier commemorating the building from when Adolf Cluss had designed it and his statement was “This is lively market for a lively neighborhood.”

HANNOLD: He said that?

EDGETT: Yeah, I’m pretty sure it was Cluss. I’d like to go back to that ... [interviewer’s laughter in the background] I can’t remember now if it was Jefferson that said that ...

HANNOLD: Oh wow! [laughter]

EDGETT: ... or if it was Cluss that said that but one of them said it and it's on the plaque that's mounted outside the Market and we actually thought that might become a nice ...

HANNOLD: Yeah.

EDGETT: ... sort of marketing statement for Eastern Market as well. That was not part of what we were supposed to be doing at that point and it is there, it is a permanent part of the Market and if somebody picks up on it someday that would be terrific. So we felt like, you know, all the groups together had said it's a lively market, you know, in essence they'd said that. They like the fact that it's historical, which has a lot to do with why we chose the color of brick red and why we kept the sort of stylized shape of the building as part of the mark. And then we wanted people to understand the history of it from the fact that it's been ongoing since its inception, which is very rare in this country but extremely rare in DC. It's the only market that's been continually operated. So we put a little sign across the top of it that said "On Capitol Hill since 18 ...

HANNOLD: 73

EDGETT: 73-76-78? 1873 [Hannold and Edgett talking simultaneously and laughing] That's what that mark says, 1873. And everybody felt like that was kind of suggested and came up in a lot of meetings and now everybody felt like that sort of, you know, brought back another part in marketing message which is the fact that it's been continually operating. So it's a little bit of a, you know, iconic representation, it's a little bit of energy coming out of it from the glow in the east and from the lively market standpoint, and it's the color and the phrase "since 1873"—sort of all brought it together for everybody and people seem to like the mark and it's, you know, there is no real budget behind marketing it but it seems to be coming along and getting integrated into what people are using.

HANNOLD: Uh-huh. When ... and your client was Eastern Market Venture and when you say "everybody" that would be who was on this, was there a selection committee, or advisory committee?

EDGETT: There was EMCAC [Eastern Market Community Advisory Committee], which has representatives from all areas from the community, from the Capitol Hill Association of Merchants and Professionals, from the Historic Society, the Eastern Market—all the different vendor types—some from the inside, some from the outside. So they have a group that's there. We also met with Historic Society, we also met with each vendor group individually and then we also met with the community at large.

HANNOLD: But there was a pretty good consensus around that? You said you presented four different...

EDGETT: We presented four different logo options and that's the one that everybody chose. It wasn't a 100% unanimous but there was a pretty good consensus around it and I don't think in the end anybody thought like we didn't have, you know, we didn't have any real opposition to it

HANNOLD: So prior to the fire how did that branding campaign get carried out?

EDGETT: We had begun—once that was settled we had begun a—at the same time we were doing a ... Let me just step back a second. At the same time we doing a market study on the type of people that were coming and where they were coming from, so we were doing weekend surveys and during the week surveys in order to develop a marketing plan. So by the time we finished the branding, we finished the surveys and we were ready to launch some advertising and so the initial debut of the icon was an advertising campaign. Budgets were not real strong but, you know, we knew that there had to be a presence on the web, we knew that there had to be a presence in some of the local papers, and then we knew that there had to be a presence within the tourist community. And so that's where you started seeing the branding showing up and some key messages about the Market and the types of people that you would, vendors that you would find were what made it unique.

HANNOLD: Uh-huh, uh-huh

EDGETT: So all that started to come out and then we were at the same time developing a signage program because everybody's been to the Market knows that there is not a single sign anywhere on the Market that tells you you are at Eastern Market, or even has a street address.

HANNOLD: Uh-huh, uh-huh

EDGETT: And in our surveys, you know, we did find quite a few people who weren't really sure it was open on the weekdays, you know, and especially in the summer when the doors where all shut ...

HANNOLD: Right.

EDGETT: ... there was no idea of that. You could walk past and there might be few people mingling outside, you had no idea what was going on inside. And so, and we also were asked to come up with maybe a, you know, a banner program that could be seasonal to try and create a little bit more of an excitement around the Market on the outside. So we developed that program and got it approved by the same committees. They all approved the same sign program—everybody that approved the logo and branding program had also approved the sign program. You know, we had to go downtown to DCRA [Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs] to get their approval and we had gotten that on Friday and it burned on Monday. [laughs]

HANNOLD: Hmm, my gosh.

EDGETT: So it was that.

HANNOLD: When you say DCRA, what division of DCRA would that be?

EDGETT: It's the same people you get your building codes through in historic ...

HANNOLD: Uh-huh, OK.

EDGETT: Their historic people and their permitting people...

HANNOLD: OK, so it would have both involved permits and, of course, preservation people.

EDGETT: Right. So they had approved everything and we were ready to go and drawings still exist.
[laughs]

HANNOLD: So how did you hear about the fire?

EDGETT: I actually had a friend who was closing the bars down that night and called me and said, "Hey, Eastern Market is on fire!" at three in the morning. So that was pretty devastating. So I went down...

HANNOLD: Did you go down then?

EDGETT: Yup, I went down then and took a look at it. It's a sad moment.

HANNOLD: Yeah.

EDGETT: I was glad to see that the whole building wasn't burning though, you know, but it was really just very tragic, it was ... You know, I was happy to see that it looked like the brick part was still there and you know all kinds of things wander through your head because you knew that, you know, they were trying to renovate, and you were wondering why, why the timing of the fire was so uncanny.

HANNOLD: Uh-huh.

EDGETT: So, but anyway, it was just—I remember more the just overwhelming sadness that everybody shared.

HANNOLD: How did you feel about the aftermath and the response in the media days and weeks afterwards?

EDGETT: Well, the company we were working with, Eastern Market Venture, the two guys, Stuart [I. Smith] and Bruce [S. Cook], who had also been working with all the vendors basically disappeared so that was a little bit of additional blow on top of everything. But the neighbors rallied and the people that were involved in the Market—not so much the people that were the vendors but the people that used the Market on a daily basis or on a weekend basis—decided that, you know, collectively that this was not going to happen, our Market was not going to close, you know, wasn't going to be the end of Eastern Market on Capitol Hill.

HANNOLD: Uh-huh.

EDGETT: And they rallied. You know, it was amazing, amazing feat, you know, to see just people from all over the place just say “what can we do to make this not shut down, what can we do to help the vendors out?” A lot of the vendors weren't insured, a lot of the vendors, you know, this was their ... the majority of their income if not their entire income and for a lot of us this is what make Capitol Hill kind of so different from every other community, certainly in DC, but maybe in places all over the world. So I was amazed. I was on the board of CHAMPS [Capitol Hill Association of Merchants and Professionals] at the time and, you know, we were working to do whatever we could do. We had a fundraiser at Marty's that raised—I can't remember now, \$50,000 in one night, something like that. The [Capitol Hill] Community Foundation was awesome, they stood up to help the ... do some fundraisers as well, but they also stood up to help collect all the money that people wanted to donate and help disperse it.

HANNOLD: Uh-huh, right.

EDGETT: Gary Peterson was just an amazing volunteer to come out of the woodwork and managed a lot of that. And I just think it was really awesome. And it was kind of awesome the way the Mayor responded too to the people. It was really nice of him to come down and say, you know, we're going to do the right thing here. And so we, my agency, Edge Advertising got involved as much as we could as well. When we realized what was happening, there was kind of a strange dynamic where all this publicity was being put out as much as possibly could to raise money because it had burned down. Within a few weeks vendors started to gather outside and sell their wares again, especially the artists and the flea market people who—it was easier for them because they weren't there, you know, when the building burned down. And these people kept showing up to sell their other stuff but people weren't coming because they thought that because it had burned down nothing was happening. And so we were asked what could we do in the meantime to maybe help combat some of that publicity that said ... that stopped everybody from coming to buy.

HANNOLD: So who would be asking you at this point?

EDGETT: Well, this was being asked of us, asked by people like the vendors themselves.

HANNOLD: Uh-huh.

EDGETT: Because they now were pretty familiar with us. And EMCAC and Eastern Market Venture, some other people from Eastern Market Venture were starting to trickle back into the picture and, you know, they were sort of aware of it although I don't think they were too much involved at this point. I think mostly it was the vendors and EMCAC, in particular vendors who were crying and saying, "Look, you know we still are here. We're still conducting business." And all the publicity says everywhere that, you know, it's burned down and no one says that it's burned down but the vendors are still here, you know. So we had to play sort of a delicate game of how do you not stop the money that's flowing in, which is being used to sort of support all this action going on and yet, you know, say we can come out and the vendors are still here. So we came up with a couple campaigns that were funded out of that money, so we were no longer being funded by Eastern Market Venture. It was out of the community funds to try and drive local traffic back to the Market and some tourism traffic. And some of that just involved getting the word out on websites because everybody plastered all over the internet that, you know, that it had been burned down ...

HANNOLD: Right, uh-huh.

EDGETT: ... and there wasn't anything there anymore, you know. And even the sites that had been previously promoting the flea market and the artisans, you know, said "it's burned down"—didn't say "it's burned down but the artisans are still here," you know [Hannold's laughter in the background], which is key. So we worked with, you know, from that angle trying to get some messages out there in that regard and trying to get just regular campaign up, you know. And then that period lasted until they actually got a tent up and then they were able to say, you know, that they actually were completely back in business, which was [inaudible] ...

HANNOLD: You mean the large tent that replaces ... ?

EDGETT: Yes, the large tent which meant that the inside vendors were back in business as well so that everybody was back in business while all the reconstruction was happening. Then eventually the money ran out from the community fund and that sort of dried up all the marketing and there was a little bit of trickling of marketing going on between Eastern Market Venture showing up from time to time, but that wasn't anything that had potential after that. And then when the tent went up too there was some money for some—not the same signs, but you know they, DDOT [DC Department of Transportation] had asked us to, or the contractor Turner Construction who was working for DDOT had asked us to come in and

design the graphics on the end of the tent and the vendors and everything needed signs on the inside. So some of the money raised from the Community Foundation was for that, some of the money came from DDOT to do that. And we just took an old picture we found from the 70s in the National Archives for the ...

HANNOLD: End graphics on the tent?

EDGETT: Right, and we added some sort of fun to it, gave it a little bit of a, you know, an angle and something interesting so people had a sense that that was ...

HANNOLD: The historic image, huh?

EDGETT: Yeah, the historic image. But it wasn't real straight up, it was more creative and just fun.

HANNOLD: Uh-huh, right.

EDGETT: I think it allowed people to think we were trying to recreate the Market and yet this was all part of the same community. And then there was a real boom for the branding piece of it because we were able to put the logo on the sides of the tent, too. Knowing that it's only going to be up there for two years. We wouldn't have normally put a sign up that big but... [laughing]

HANNOLD: And then inside, the large banners over each stall?

EDGETT: Yeah, the money raised by the community actually paid for all those banners.

HANNOLD: Do you know do they go into the new building or?

EDGETT: There was no budget to move the signs. At the moment there is no budget to do anything for the vendors.

HANNOLD: No signage whatsoever?

EDGETT: Right, on the interior. They are approving sign over the front door. Out of the entire signage campaign I think maybe one sign is going to go up over the front door [traffic noise in the background]. So I think it's up to the individual vendors if they want to move the signs that are in there now. And I know even ... I do want to say that my company donated maybe a 100 hours to that project.

HANNOLD: Uh-huh.

EDGETT: At least. And we got several volunteers and companies we were working with to donate part of their time and resources to that because people didn't pay for all that stuff straight up. I mean, everybody was part of, partly donating stuff.

HANNOLD: Uh-huh.

EDGETT: You know, some of the installations were for free, some of the materials were for free, some of them we paid for. And it was a lot, it was a big community effort, you know. Everybody was donating what they could.

HANNOLD: Absolutely.

EDGETT: You know, and the Metro—we had run ads in the Metro and the Metro donated about 50% of the ad space. And some of the radio spots we're in, NPR had donated some of the space. So it was, you know, we didn't run into anybody who wasn't willing to help out, you know, in some way. So this was felt, you know, across the area, it wasn't just people on Capitol Hill saying, "Hey, poor me."

HANNOLD: Right. I'd like to I guess get a step back and ask you about that because I'm ... you know, to what extent are people coming from outside the Hill and outside of DC, the immediate DC area?

EDGETT: I actually, I can go back and pull the exact statistics, I can't remember now, four years ago ...

HANNOLD: In general?

EDGETT: It was about, if I had to say on the weekends, on the weekdays it was about 80% of the people are from Capitol Hill.

HANNOLD: Uh-huh.

EDGETT: There weren't very many tourists walking around during the weekdays. It also was never publicized as anything to do.

HANNOLD: Right.

EDGETT: I mean, it's publicized by the vendors right now ...

HANNOLD: Uh-huh.

EDGETT: ... and it always has been for the weekends.

HANNOLD: You said you did speak with the tourism people like DC Heritage Tourism Office.

EDGETT: Uh-huh, yeah.

HANNOLD: But they aren't actively promoting?

EDGETT: Well, what they promote, they actively do promote Eastern Market but what they do is they promote the weekends and it's mostly because that's when the vendor groups are there. One of the things that was in our original marketing plan was to also market Eastern Market as a destination for any tourists coming to DC any day of the week. You know, to go in and see these all vendors, see the old Market, you know, it's kind of a cool thing to do and it's not some contrived market, it's a real market with, you know, it's been in operation for a long time. So that never really took off and went into place. The marketing of the Market now is done almost exclusively from the vendors and so the vendors have their own little websites and their own contacts with...

HANNOLD: OK, I didn't really notice that.

EDGETT: Yeah, and so, so that heritage tours and people and those types of people are getting their cues from the actual vendors. And that's why it's all oriented toward the weekends.

HANNOLD: Uh-huh.

EDGETT: Because, you know, people selling meat are not necessarily going to call the DC cultural tourism board and say "have people come over." But they would, people would actually come to DC and go to the area if they knew about it. So the marketing, the idea of having a Market manager was to bring some of the marketing under control as well and direct it and kind of take Eastern Market more seriously for the tourism draw that it is or could be.

HANNOLD: So you feel there is still quite a bit of potential to be tapped there?

EDGETT: Oh, I think so, yeah. Especially all summer long. Now that the new building's there and it's not quite as rustic as the old building.

HANNOLD: Yes.

EDGETT: [Chuckling] ...and it'll have air conditioning, things like that. You know, it's really a little bit more of a luxury stop [unintelligible] quite the same appeal to the same people but yeah, I mean, people to come see a real farmers market it's a big deal. People do it, you know, whenever they travel to Europe they always go to local farmers markets and ...

HANNOLD: Right.

EDGETT: So I think that from what we can gather from our surveys that we did on the weekends about 60% of the people were from Washington area and about 40% were tourists. That's pretty good shot of that. I can't remember the exact numbers but I can get them to you because it's surveys, I can pull it down off the server and send it to you so you could put the exact numbers in this report.

HANNOLD: You didn't mention a number of things and I'm not sure if you were involved in those as well and that would be like [inaudible] music or entertainment during the weekends last summer I believe it was.

EDGETT: No, that's all done through the Community Foundation.

HANNOLD: And the exterior, the graphics along the alleyway, the windows with graphics?

EDGETT: That was done through the DC Arts Commission and our agency was asked to, maybe me in particular was asked to curate that, you know, show how to choose the pictures and put them up on the tent, make sure the installation is going to last, you know, as long as we need it.

HANNOLD: They still look great but I saw one today had a corner peeled and I'm sure people are wondering ...

END OF TAPE 1/SIDE 1
TAPE 1/SIDE 2

HANNOLD: So when we stopped we were talking about various sort of extra activities that enhanced the visibility and sort of created more festive atmosphere around the old and new Market. And you said you were involved in curating and figuring how to do the graphics along the alley.

EDGETT: Yeah, I helped to choose them. There was a photo contest done, or an art contest done by the DC Arts Commission and all the local artists submitted their versions of Eastern Market and so we helped choose which ones and then which directions they should go in. And we had actually gone into the Market in the basement of the Market and found some of the old windows and took pictures of the frames and then we sort of traded a frame for the art out of the old frames from the windows to try and just ... I mean, sometimes these things were really subtle, but to just try and give it some tie to the old Market so it's actual window frames from the old Market that are used to frame out the pictures that are on the side of the wall. And then the original art for that, I believe, is all digital and it's going to stay with the DC Arts Commission. I'm not sure what they're going to do with that once they're done but we created the key for that. We also created a key for the art that was put by the DC Arts Commission in all the windows in the old building after the burning down. And then the most interesting pieces over there are the large

Cluss banners because right before all this happened we had done the hundred, was it the hundred and fiftieth celebration of Adolf Cluss and it was done in Germany ...

HANNOLD: Right.

EDGETT: ... and in DC—a sort of a sister city celebration and that's when we put the plaque on the building with Monte Edwards and we were asked to put the Cluss banner and Cluss plaques around the building. And the two banners that we put up, everybody said, "you can't put banners up there, they'll get graffiti, they'll pull it down," and I said, "no they won't." The building doesn't even have any graffiti on it, you know, it's like ...

HANNOLD: That's a good point.

EDGETT: You know, it's not, people are not going to destroy these and so it's just funny to me that now the banners have survived not only the graffiti's and the vandalisms but they have also survived the fire. Because both banners are still there and they still look great [Hannold chuckles]. For some reason contractors didn't pull them down either and the scaffolding didn't scuff them. So I'm not really sure how long they are planning to leave them there but that was a part of the celebration. There was three banners, one inside and two outside, and the one inside of course is long gone. And then there was three more small ones and those are gone. So I have no idea if they are going to keep them up there forever or not. And then we did get involved in one other aspect of festivities over there and that was the holiday decorations. And we had, for the first time I guess Eastern Market had an official holiday decoration budget and that was with the original guys of Eastern Market Venture and so we had helped them, you know, put in a Santa room, cover the entire Market in lights, put the wreaths up. There were some wreaths already there, put those up and then we bought some bigger wreaths and lit the shed and, you know, kind of ...

HANNOLD: This was prior to the fire?

EDGETT: Prior to the fire. And then after the fire, of course, we stored all that stuff in the Center Hall so ... It actually, some of it melted, but some of it we were actually able to use, so we took what we could use back out and some of the garlands and stuff we used and we just supplemented with more garlands and lights and so it lit up the new tent area. And then we were done with that. The second year we also stored the stuff in the Center Hall with big signs on it in Spanish and English, you know, if you need to remove this, call us first [Hannold laughs in the background] and the contractors either stole them or threw them away, we have no idea which. So the third year, which was last year, we had to buy all new decorations again, which was really kind of the city to come up with the money for that but ... They're

being stored in a private home this year [both laugh]. And I don't know, I'm hoping that nothing happens to that and next year when it's time for holiday decorations to come up that we can just whip them out and put them up everywhere. But it will be different this year because I don't know if the tent will be there in December and they don't, you know, everything doesn't just automatically fit the other building, so we'll be going back to lighting up the old one, assuming they want Christmas decorations up again this year, but it really adds a lot of, a lot to the Market to have it lit up, you know. And our decorations tied in with what the BID [Capitol Hill Business Improvement District] and CHAMPS was doing with the snowflakes. We tried to make it all kind of seamless but ... Actually, we, you know, and then having the music there. I think that prior to the fire that was being organized by Eastern Market Venture but after the fire I think it's always been organized by Capitol Hill [Community] Foundation.

HANNOLD: So as far as you know, then, when the new, when the restored Market reopens next week ...

EDGETT: Yeah, this 26th I think

HANNOLD: ... there will be no advertising or there has been no effort?

EDGETT: Pretty much not. There is a little trickle of advertising being done right now. It's going to be a soft opening. It's, the mayor is going to show up.

HANNOLD: That is the Friday that it opens ...

EDGETT: Yeah

HANNOLD: ... is the soft opening, considered the soft opening like for the week or?

EDGETT: You know, forgive me because I was traveling the last meeting, but the very last meeting that I was at I was told that this was the soft opening. It was just going to be the mayor showing up and the ribbon-cutting and I'm sure that, you know, some of the local publications will be there to ...

HANNOLD: Right. I should think that newspaper and TV would be carrying it certainly at that [inaudible]

EDGETT: I have no idea if the TV is doing it because nobody's been contracted to be in charge of getting the TV there so unless DC is doing that we don't have an outside market manager anymore because Eastern Market Ventures is gone out of the picture and Edge Advertising wasn't contracted to do that, so if somebody in all the world of people has thought of it [Hannold speaking inaudibly]. Yeah, and—or the media themselves might be. I mean, it's out there in news, in e-news so they might have thought that it's worth it. There has been some talk of doing a bigger grand opening in the fall, some kind

of celebration then to sort of let the external world know that it's up and running. There is always a problem when you move vendors over, they've been given a week to move over. Half of them won't be ready to go anyway for some little reason. So it's not a good idea the day it opens.

HANNOLD: Right.

EDGETT: You know, and this tight of a deadline is put on things to have a huge grand opening party anyway, but it's, to me it's a real missed opportunity media-wise and there was talk in all the meetings of just anybody who felt like getting, helping us get the word out, help us do that. But nobody was being tasked with it, nobody was being paid to do it.

HANNOLD: I am not real, I do not know specifics but I know that there are a lot of things that are going to happen, I think, that weekend. Face painting for kids and I know there is a call for volunteers through CHAMPS or something. So I have a feeling that it's sort of been growing ...

EDGETT: Organically.

HANNOLD: Organically.

EDGETT: Well, that's what they said they could do. At the meeting they said we need, there is no budget, so anything that can be done they wanted to have a photo show inside the North Hall.

HANNOLD: Right, that will happen I believe.

EDGETT: And so they, you know, put out the call to see if somebody would carry that and I don't ... Because they'd asked all this stuff to happen organically and what not, I don't have a good handle on what exactly will happen.

HANNOLD: Uh-huh. Or that there was any one person sort of in charge?

EDGETT: There wasn't one person in charge. So it makes a little bit difficult, you know, and face painting is a little easy to get a face painter down there and do that, I mean, but ... and the music's been showing up anyway, you know, because that's already sort of set up with the Community Foundation. And Community Foundation I'm sure is stepping up to the plate to do some of this because they've been, you know, able to raise the resources to do lot of this stuff and they also have a lot of connections and they've been in the periphery of it the whole time. I just, the last, the very last meeting I was at there was just, you know, there was a call for volunteers, you know, with, you know, the whole host of things would be nice to do. They did say they would have a stage but ...

HANNOLD: But what goes on on it?

EDGETT: And that was, yeah, you know, there wasn't any—I don't know if that's where the mayor is going to do his speech from there if there's the stage. I mean, they said, you know, and all these questions kept coming out of the audience: well, you know, when is the stage going to set up, when is it going to be down, what kind of music are we going to have there? So this was a month ago and there was all this questions still, so unless everything's kind of come together very recently I really don't know. And nobody has been sending out email saying this is what's happening, because I am on the email volunteer list and I'm not getting much, so ... [chuckles] unless I got taken off of it somehow, I don't know, but I was on it for a while, so, because I've been to all the meetings when I wasn't out of town, so ... But, you know, it was my understanding that they were going to try and do something even bigger in the fall but, you know, where they had a little more time to plan it. And in all honesty July isn't that peak time for local residents to be celebrating things. So I don't know exactly what is going to happen, you know. I'll probably learn more. Well, there is a few people I could call but I haven't yet. [laughter]

HANNOLD: Maybe you shouldn't.

EDGETT: Maybe I shouldn't, I know.

HANNOLD: I wonder if you could say something about I guess what you have learned though your work with Market maybe about the distinctions between outdoor vendors and indoor vendors and their needs and views. Probably that's not something that can be easily summed up so ...

EDGETT: No, but I do think that, I think that you have, I think you have a lot of really cool people over there—inside, outside. There is only 11 people inside, you know, or 12 people inside, there is ... And everybody else is outside but you know, you have had this ...

HANNOLD: And I'm sorry, could you say the figure you said again about the total universe of vendors?

EDGETT: It's about 275 vendors. In fact, when we were doing the surveys and it was a little bit more under control of the appropriate manager. I'm not saying anything about the current way of managing it but properly managed, you know, you couldn't get another stand in anywhere. I mean, it was packed in the parking lot, behind Hines, it was packed out on the, you know, the North Hall area, North Hall itself was packed. You know, if you're advertising that as a destination for buying fresh produce, you know, people are going to flock to it, you know, and when all the advertising goes away because there isn't proper management, you know, you do have vendors that step away, they don't come because the same type of crowd isn't coming. But there is around 275 vendors and there was the craft or artisan people who are more concentrated on Saturday, they're pretty much there Saturday and Sunday and then you have the flea market people who are more concentrated on Sunday although some of them are there on Saturday,

and you have as well ... And then you have the farmers' line, which is generally a Saturday thing and occasionally some of them will also come on Sunday. Then there is a mixture of food vendors that are coming in there now. But with really proper management, I mean, there isn't a space left to be rented out, I mean, you've got to have people coming to that area, they've got to know what's there. It's not expensive for people to show up, it's a real organic—it has been up until now, you know, a real organic set up. So it's almost like a couple people had visions of, you know, what should happen there and they, you know, artisans would tell their friends and then their friends would tell their friends and the next thing you know you have this organic growth taking place where you have some really high quality artisans there that you don't find at your average farmers' market, you know, and those people, you know, advertise to their constituents, to their consumers. And, you know, John, or the guy who was managing that at the time, who'd been managing it for like 30 some years ...

HANNOLD: Can you state his name? Rall?

EDGETT: Tom Rall—he was, you know, he was doing a pretty good job of letting people know and the outside world what was happening at Eastern Market so there was a steady stream of, you know ... And he was doing the advertising for them. So that was John Harrod and Tom Rall, there's two guys managing; one managed the flea market one managed more of the crafts and both of them did their, you know, to the best of their ability they were doing some marketing and so it was bringing people in and they fit in with the organic nature of the Market. But they were themselves organic business people also doing business there, you know, they were just like—it was sort of, you know, an anomaly, especially the longer it went on the more it became an anomaly. And so the city I think, you know, would like to control it more and the Market manager tried but they probably would have succeeded if they had stuck around long enough, you know.

HANNOLD: Uh-huh.

EDGETT: But since Bruce and Stuart disappeared [chuckling] for lack of better words, that didn't work out the way everybody had planned.

HANNOLD: So what do you think, what is your feeling about controlling it more? You appear to feel that when it was operating organically it was doing pretty well perhaps.

EDGETT: It was doing pretty well and ... but you know none of the vendors inside or outside had a lease. I mean, in any day, any moment somebody could come in and shut them down and many of them made their whole livelihood there. So that was never an ideal situation for either party but it was successful nonetheless because no one ever did shut them down, no one ever did charge them too much,

you know, and they kept coming as a result, you know, and they kept sort of marketing themselves as a result. But meanwhile, you know, the building was falling down and there was other problems that were happening so, you know, they tried to find ways to fix all these problems and, you know ... I'm not sure the city should be managing it and the city is not sure either, that's why they tried to hire an outside manager. But why that never was successful I'm not sure because it seems like it really could and should be able to find a decent market manager.

HANNOLD: And you would think for both the inside market and for the North Hall and for, or would you think that it needs to be split up in some way?

EDGETT: I don't think it needs to be split up. I mean, it's ... I think the inside vendors never think of themselves as tourist draw and that may be a shift in their own mentality. They certainly wouldn't move out if more people came during the week, they also would be welcome, you know, when you market the whole thing as a tourist destination, you explain what's going on during the week and you explain what's going on during the weekend, it's not that complicated. You know, and you get to pull money and pull marketing dollars to split it up into four factions, plus then to understand there is 200 to 300 vendors outside that are also marketing their own stuff. You know, it's a lot of wasted synergy, too. So if each individual business did some of their own marketing and then collectively they have a big oversight plan, you know, I think that would be the best scenario. So somebody who is selling jewelry could beam out to their own constituency, "hey, I'm here every weekend," and they can do their own marketing but they don't have to be shelling out a huge amount of money because some of the people are already familiar with, you know, Eastern ... there is a lot of people who are going to be coming to Eastern Market.

That's an idea behind the branding and talking to everybody about that or something, so that, you know, they could all take that logo and use it individually as well as use it collectively—or any of the materials that we came up with—you know, it'd be a way for everybody to feel inclusive and part of it. So I think that, I think that that still is viable, it's just, it's hard to understand, I guess, when you're going to get to a point where, you know, good intentions are realized [chuckles]. Because I think that ideas—everybody wanted the market manager, it was, EMCAC was set in place to sort of make sure it happened right. I think that what they got is maybe 70% effective market manager, but it was a learning curve and they were on an uphill swing. And then the fire happened and everything changed for some, you know, everything changed for reasons, you know, I mean things happen sometimes, you know. It's like when Bruce and Stuart never showed their face again after the fire nobody expected that. Everybody expected them to show up and do what they needed to do and it was not anybody's fault, you know. That's like, that's not the city's fault, not all the people at the Market's fault, not EMCAC's fault, nothing you know. It just happened and so that whole idea of hiring a market manager failed, you know, and then the city had

to restart their whole process and for some reason that hasn't resulted in a replacement market manager and it's ... On the top of that they're dealing with the renovation and then the moves and the, you know, budget crisis, and the schools [chuckles] everything else, so ...

HANNOLD: How would you characterize the city's effort, though, in general? Where you pleased, impressed?

EDGETT: I was pleased with their response after the fire for sure. I think that the city has a revolving door with the people in charge of the Market and that causes ...

HANNOLD: Disruption.

EDGETT: Well, it makes difficult for anybody to really do a good job because every year there is a new person there and it has been for four years now, so ... And each person is fine in a lot of ways but by the time they really figure it out, they're gone. And so I also think that the idea of having an outside market manager is a really good one and they should try again seriously to get that in place, and I'm not really sure why they haven't. I don't know the inside politics to that so I can't really speak to why that hasn't happened but I think that that's still a good idea and everybody was in a consensus with it, you know, whether they liked the idea or not they all agreed to go forward and then for some reason all this backfired. Who would have expected what happened to happen, you know? So I think that I can't really say the city is ... the only thought I have about the city is that it would be nice to see them actually follow through and get the appropriate market manager for that, for the Market, someone who, you know, has appropriate, you know, two or five year contract and can be, you know, get up to speed and stay there for a while, you know. I mean, gone are the days, I guess, when somebody comes and works on for the city in a department and stays for ...

HANNOLD: Uh-huh, yeah.

EDGETT: Ten years [chuckles] so ... It's just too hard for them to learn all the nuances of what's going on. And I'm not going to say anybody is doing a really bad job. It's more just, it's impossible to do that job if you haven't been around a while or your background isn't in market managing, so ...

HANNOLD: I'm trying to sort of I guess bring it to a conclusion here. How has your understanding of the Market, I guess, changed through your involvement with the marketing effort the last couple of years?

EDGETT: I guess I want to say it hasn't really changed that much. It's just, you know, I love the Market, you know, I feel the same way probably, you know, thousands of other Capitol Hill people do. It's something I want to continue to take for granted that's there, you know, and I think if anything's changed

it's the volatility of, my understanding of the volatility of it. The resilience of the individual vendors to show up regardless of all their complaints has been great to see.

HANNOLD: When you said volatility I wonder if you also meant fragility but then you follow with “resilience,” so ...

EDGETT: Yeah, I mean these vendors, the farmers' lines outside, they have choices. I mean, farmers' markets in Dupont Circle are not that far away for them to take their stuff over there instead. There is one on H Street, they could be taking their stuff over there instead. There's been many efforts in recent years to get artisan markets going in other parts of the city—that gives artists choices of where to go. And they will go to where the buying crowds are, you know, so ... because they're in business, you know. But all of these people over there are almost all of them—probably all of them—love Eastern Market, too, and they want that to succeed. And so no matter how much they get battered around by the situation constantly changing and insensitivities to what's been going on vs. what needs to happen, you know, lack of communication and stuff like that, they [chuckles], they keep showing up. You know, it's an amazing story, it's an amazing story that these people show up all the time and continue to do work and it's an amazing story that they, you know, that the businesses are thriving over there, you know, despite all the disruption, despite the continual turnover of management.

HANNOLD: I'm sure there's lots of variety, but you would describe it as thriving because I know it has been a difficult period.

EDGETT: Well, it's been a really difficult period and I don't know of a single vendor whose sales aren't down right now. And I said thriving on purpose, though, because—well, some of them have backed out but I think that we're almost at the end of all the disruption and we'll just have to see if management can go back and do what they need to do since they don't have the other distractions any more. And since we don't have an appropriate manager in place, we only have the city, everybody is wondering what's going to really happen, you know. It'd be nice to have a private ... I think the original idea needs to be implemented, I don't know how quickly it can be done, though. But I think they are thriving. I don't think they're making money like they used to—I really know they're not, I know quite a few vendors over there who aren't doing nearly as well but in this economy they don't feel like they have too many options at the moment, which keeps them coming back. You know, people making 60 grand might be making 30 grand but it's like [chuckling] what else are you going to do? You know, it's like, it's a tough economy out there right now and until the economy strengthens ... But the second the economy is strong again ... Because right before the economy started taking its nose-dive, I mean, people were on a roll to move out of there due to mismanagement. They're not ...

HANNOLD: Really?

EDGETT: They didn't want to, but you know, they were saying, "hey ..."

HANNOLD: Inside vendors?

EDGETT: Well, the inside vendors there is only 12, I'm talking as a whole. Inside vendors are, they talk about it too. I mean I know several that have been made offers, they get solicited by, you know, developers saying, "hey, I think you should open one of your stores here." And you know, once they open to the one that does the best is the one they want to keep, you know. They get offers quite frequently. Some of them in particular do a really good job. And I won't name names but yeah, the inside vendors, too, you know. Outside vendors, they have an option to sell their wares other places and inside vendors are ... I don't know if all of them get solicited but I know several have gotten offers because their stuff is so incredibly good [chuckles]. You know how they do ... Two years lease free and then blah blah blah or whatever, you know ...

HANNOLD: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

EDGETT: Just incentive to try and open up somewhere else where they know there'd be a draw for their center or some kind of building.

HANNOLD: I guess one last thing would be what impact do you think the redevelopment of the Hines site [Hine Jr. High School, at 7th and Pennsylvania, SE, just south of the temporary Eastern Market, slated for redevelopment] could have or should have? How should that be handled in terms of the mix of uses, types of uses to hopefully strengthen and augment the Market? And have you been involved at all in that?

EDGETT: I've been involved on the periphery. I've seen the drawings, seen the proposals that they plan on, posted online, and I've seen some of the comments that people made. I think that [long pause]. I think that that area has ... It probably, you know, it hasn't reached its potential yet, I want to say as a draw for tourist, a draw for people, a draw for the locals to come and spend time. So I'm all for the Hines location having opportunity for residents there, opportunity for tourists there, opportunity for more vending or more restaurants. I think it will only be good for the Market to draw more people in. The only thing that might hurt the Market itself, the interior Market is if they put a grocery store in there, which I don't think they're talking about, so ... Oh, they are? One of them?

HANNOLD: I believe yes, the smaller sort of specialty grocery, definitely was mentioned in at least one, if not more of them [developer's proposals].

EDGETT: I may be a little biased but I think a good organic grocery store ... I mean, *Yes!* [an organic grocery located on the 600 block of Pennsylvania Avenue, SE] is pretty good but they're not ...

END OF INTERVIEW